



"Cartoon depicting pressure on labour from capitalist," 1919. NA-2790-2. Glenbow Museum.

The Canadian labour revolt was repressed with considerable – even deadly – violence, but this did not mean that it was entirely defeated.

Major figures in the Calgary sympathy strike went on to win elected office. William Irvine was elected MP in 1921; Robert Parkyn, elected Alderman in 1922, won a seat in the provincial election of 1926. Labour candidates were regularly elected to city council and the Board of Education for the next three decades.

In the years after World War II, the influence of Calgary's labour movement declined. Nevertheless, some struggles provoked broad-based public sympathy and union solidarity. In 1995, hospital laundry workers – many of them women – launched a wildcat strike to save their low-paying jobs. Unions across the province were prepared to mount sympathy strikes to support them.



"Striking laundry workers, Alberta," 2012. Alberta Labour History Institute.

100 years later, the lessons and legacy of the 1919 strike wave are mixed. There were missed opportunities to widen the circle of solidarity to include Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups.

Still, the 1919 workers' revolt serves as a reminder that through organization and political activity working people can change society for the better.

"Don't get discouraged. Don't be misled. Look beyond Calgary. Look beyond Winnipeg. Look beyond Canada. Read the signs of the times. From every corner of the globe are wafted to us the winds, the voice of myriads of our fellow workers, joyously singing that great refrain, 'Justice for the working class!' We will admit that sometimes the outlook must seem dark, but it is only the darkness before the dawn. United we stand, divided we fall!" – *Calgary Strike Bulletin*, 14 June 1919